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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7435
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHDT/AMEMBASSY DILI 0909
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1783
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1328
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2172
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4580
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1487
RUEHPT/AMCONSUL PERTH 0497
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 003420

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/PD (FOR LNEIGHBORS) EAP/MTS,
EAP/MLS (COPE), EAP/RSP,
G (CURRIE)
NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [BM](#) [ID](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA -- ACTIVISTS CALL FOR REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN
JAKARTA

REF: A. JAKARTA 3297 B. JAKARTA 2855

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¶1. (U) This message is Sensitive but Unclassified -- Please handle accordingly. It also contains an Action Request in Para 7.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: A group of approximately 40 Indonesian civil society, labor, and media representatives gathered at Pol/C's residence on December 17 to discuss ways forward in pressing--on the national and regional levels--for democratic change in Burma. Coalescing around the idea of civil society hosting a regional conference on Burma in Jakarta early next year, the group also proposed lobbying against the ASEAN Charter and holding anti-Burma regime demonstrations. Mission is planning further meetings down the line as we continue to encourage Indonesian activism regarding Burma.
END SUMMARY.

MEETING RE BURMA

¶3. (SBU) On December 17, Pol/C hosted at San Francisco House roughly 40 civil society, labor, religious, media, and political leaders, as well as third country diplomats. DCM, Management Counselor and PAO also participated in the meeting, which was a follow-up to the October gathering at DCM's Residence (ref B). The focus of the meeting was on next steps that Indonesian civil society can take on the national and regional levels to try to effect change in Burma. In his brief remarks, Pol/C underscored the brutal events that transpired--and continued to transpire--in Burma. Pol/C underlined the importance of even small--seemingly symbolic--measures in these times, quoting Robert F. Kennedy's statement that "each time a man or a woman stands up for an idea, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he or she sends forth a tiny ripple of hope."

¶4. (SBU) DepPol/C then briefly discussed the role of civil society as an agent of transformative change. In a discussion led by the Library of Congress (LOC) Regional

Director, Indonesian members of the group discussed their experiences in 1998 when students, religious leaders, journalists, and civil society activists galvanized the democracy movement, contributing to the collapse of the Suharto regime.

PROPOSAL FOR A REGIONAL CONFERENCE

15. (SBU) During the lively group discussion and over coffee in smaller groups, guests proposed a wide range of practical options that Indonesian civil society might undertake to try to influence the situation in Burma. Several representatives--to wide agreement among the group--expressed strong interest in helping to organize a regional conference on Burma in Jakarta. They agreed that the U.S. is very important in facilitating cohesive action regarding Burma as the world's most influential nation, but cautioned that a conference should also heavily involve Indonesian civil society in order to be credible on the national and regional levels. Several guests--including from one of Indonesia's largest youth Islamic organizations, Mohammadiyah Youth--want to meet again soon to plan further steps towards a conference.

SOME OTHER IDEAS

16. (SBU) Besides the conference, guests proposed other immediate steps civil society can take, such as:

--Lobbying both the Indonesian legislature and ASEAN to oppose ratification of the ASEAN Charter given that Burma does not live up to democracy and human rights standards, and there is no mechanism to enforce the standards;

--Labor unions are planning a mass demonstration in front of the Burmese Embassy in Jakarta in January 2008 while

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discussing a possible boycott of products from Burma;

--The Southeast Asia Press Alliance (SEAPA) intends to dedicate 2008 to articles on Burma and the repression there; and,

-- The Canadian Pol/C recommended that participants look into ways to involve the Indonesian business community in Burma-related efforts.

ACTION REQUEST

17. (SBU) Mission believes that this meeting--and the earlier one held here in October--underscore Indonesian civil society's strong and abiding interest in the situation in Burma and its desire to try to help. We believe, however, that due to disorganization and lack of capacity that these organizations and their representatives will need more than a nudge from Washington as they try to get organized to take concrete action. In that light, we believe that the idea of a regional conference to be held in Jakarta some time in early 2008 makes sense and we urge Washington to review the idea in line with previous discussions (ref A). END ACTION REQUEST.

HUME